



Ramadan and diabetes

Things to think about before and during Ramadan



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Ramadan is a deeply spiritual and sacred time. In this leaflet, you'll find information on how to observe Ramadan, alternatives to fasting, and healthy food choices for suhoor and iftar.

Before Ramadan

What are the risks of fasting?

Ramadan isn't about choosing between health and religion. It is possible to fast, but there are some risks that you should be aware of.

Glucose levels too low (hypoglycaemia):

Look out for trembling, sweating, anxiety or heart palpitations.

Glucose levels too high (hyperglycaemia):

More likely to happen after iftar. This can lead to headaches, extreme tiredness and going to the toilet more often.

Dehydration:

Dry mouth, dry and wrinkled skin, sluggish feeling, lack of concentration and general fatigue can occur. It's important to replenish yourself with plenty of fluids at suhoor and iftar.

Alternatives to fasting (Sawm)

Islam makes exceptions for the elderly, young, ill, or pregnant. If your health is affected by fasting, there are alternatives that are still seen as holy and acceptable.

Give to charity:

Provide food for the poor during Ramadan.

Fast later:

If you can't fast this Ramadan, you can make up the days later in the year.

Speak to your doctor:

Before Ramadan, talk to your doctor about how to fast.

Think rehydration:

You don't have to drink water always to rehydrate. Fruit, vegetables and soup or non-sweetened beverages do the trick too!



Before Ramadan



During Ramadan

Healthy food choices

During Ramadan, it's important to make healthy choices at suhoor and iftar. The right food and drink will help you sustain your fast while keeping your blood glucose levels at the desired levels.

Suhoor

Good:

Slow release foods like beans, lentils, porridge and nuts.

Bad:

Foods high in saturated fat like ghee, samosas and pakoras.

Iftar

Good:

Sensible quantities and low-fat food like dates, fruits, nuts and soup. Remember to take adequate fluids!

Bad:

Sweets and fatty foods, anything fried.

Looking after your body

Here are some other things to consider as you get ready for Ramadan.

Continue to monitor your blood glucose levels:

This does not count as breaking fast.

Sit out of Taraweeh:

It is OK to sit out of Taraweeh if you feel physically uncomfortable considering your glucose levels.

Tell someone you're fasting:

Friends, teachers and/or colleagues should be told what to do if you feel unwell.

Carry a glucose tablet and water:

If you feel dizzy or sick while fasting, you must break the fast. Always listen to your body and discuss such episodes with your doctor.

Keep it light:

Although you may be hungry, avoid over-eating at iftar. This could lead to a spike in your blood glucose levels.



If you decide to fast, consult your doctor

- If you are taking insulin, you will require less insulin before the start of the fast (at Suhoor)
- The type of insulin may also need changing from your usual type
- Before starting the fast, you should include more slowly absorbed food in your diet (those with low glycaemic index) like beans, lentils, porridge and nuts
- Check your blood glucose levels more often than you would normally do
- When you break the fast, have only small quantities of food as required and avoid eating more of sweets and fatty, fried foods
- Try to eat just towards the ending part of Suhoor and not very early in the night
- At the end of fasting you should keep yourself hydrated by drinking water or other non-sweetened beverages

References:

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3. Saboo B *et al.* *J Assoc Physicians India*. 2019 Sep;67(9):70-77